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# THE IMPERIAL HAREM

## *Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*

*New York • Oxford*
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
1993



### At the Heart of Empire: The Integration of the Harem into the New Palace

The transformation of the imperial harem into a coherent and highly articulated institution was a principal feature of post-Süleymanic dynastic politics. This transformation was the result of changes that occurred during the reigns of Süleyman and his successors, in particular the consolidation of the royal family in the capital. As the sultan became an increasingly sedentary palace ruler, the members of his family, heretofore scattered among provincial capitals, were gradually relieved of their public duties and gathered into the imperial capital. By the end of the sixteenth century, no member of the royal family—male or female—left the capital, with the exception of the sultan himself. Sons as well as mothers became permanent inhabitants of the inner world of the palace. As the sixteenth century progressed, the ranks of the royal residence steadily grew, first absorbing the suites of royal concubines and then those of princes, and adding service staff to accommodate the needs of the harem's increased population. The soaring of palace expenses in the late sixteenth century, generally thought to be the result of the devotion of post-Süleymanic sultans to a life of pleasure, was primarily the result of the dynastic family's consolidation into a single household.

The rise to power of the imperial harem was due not just to the presence of the royal family in the capital but also to the integration of the domestic (and principally female) side of the royal household into the imperial residence. Until Süleyman's reign, the principal quarters of the harem were the royal residence known as the Old Palace (*saray-i atik*), the first palace constructed by Mehmed II after the conquest of Istanbul. By 1468 Mehmed had taken up residence in the splendid New Palace (today called the Topkapı Palace) that was being constructed on the most dramatic site in Istanbul: the point of land at the confluence of the Sea of Marmara, the Golden Horn, and the Bosphorus. However, the harem remained behind in the Old Palace for nearly another century. It did not begin to be incorporated into the New Palace (*saray-ı jedid*) until Hurrem Sultan took up residence there. After the reign of Süleyman, the harem not only grew rapidly but acquired organizational and functional characteristics befitting its new role as a principal division of the imperial residence. The enormous growth in the population of the harem created the need for greater hierarchical organization and differentiation of function than had previously been necessary. It is this expanded harem that we can appropriately call "the harem institution." It consisted of the female members of the dynastic family and the extensive household that served them. The basic outlines of the harem institution were set by the first decade of the seventeenth century, although it continued to grow and mature in succeeding decades.

As the primary residence of the sultan's family until the reign of Süleyman, the Old Palace housed princes and princesses and their mothers, and it was there that the sultan's own mother, the individual with the greatest status and authority in the harem, resided. The sultans visited the Old Palace frequently,

presumably to observe the progress of their children, to enjoy the company of their consorts, and to pay their respects to their mothers and consult with them. At least one mother of a sultan, Gülbahar Khatun, the mother of Bayezid II, believed that her son did not visit her frequently enough, for in a letter to him she wrote plaintively: "My fortune, I miss you. Even if you don't miss me, I miss you. . . . Come and let me see you. My dear lord, if you are going on campaign soon, come once or twice at least so that I may see your fortune-favored face before you go. It's been forty days since I last saw you. My sultan, please forgive my boldness. Who else do I have beside you . . . ?"[23] Because it housed all members of the royal family except the sultan himself, the Old Palace played a prominent role in royal ceremonial. Celalzade Mustafa, imperial chancellor to Süleyman and historian, described in great detail the 1530 celebration of the circumcision of Süleyman's three elder sons, Mustafa, Mehmed, and Selim. When it came time for the princes to join the festivities, they were formally escorted from the Old Palace:

> On the fourteenth day the aghas of the inner and outer service of the most noble royal household, all on horseback, arrived at the Old Imperial Palace and mounted the blessed princes on horses. . . . The princes proceeded in imperial glory to the Hippodrome, [where] the most exalted of the pashas greeted them on foot. They descended from horseback at the entrance to the hall of the imperial council, filling the *padishah* [who awaited them] with abundant happiness.[24]

Although the sultan maintained an apartment in the Old Palace,[25] his principal residence was the third courtyard of the New Palace, where he was attended by eunuchs and pages in training. From its initial construction, the New Palace also contained quarters for women, but on a limited scale.[26] According to Iacopo de Promontorio de Campis, a Genoese merchant whose description of the court of Mehmed II is one of the earliest that makes mention of the royal harem, 150 of "the most splendid, well-kept, and beautiful women that could be found in the world" were lodged at the New Palace, while the Old Palace housed 250 women.[27] It seems likely that these New Palace quarters functioned primarily to house the young women who were the sultan's current favorites and the staff to serve them; fittingly, the harem area was known in this period as "the palace of the girls."[28] Given the one mother-one son policy, such an arrangement was a logical one: a concubine would be a candidate for the sultan's sexual attentions until she became pregnant, after which time she would be lodged in the Old Palace in preparation for the royal birth, and would continue to reside there with her child (if she gave birth to a daughter, she might still be eligible for the sultan's sexual attentions). The source of new concubines for the sultan was the Old Palace, where certain carefully selected young girls were given the training appropriate to a royal consort. Luigi Bassano described the custom by which a concubine chosen by the sultan was brought from the Old Palace to the New Palace:

> The Grand Turk has a palace of women at quite a distance from his own. There he keeps a great number of young Christian slave girls: . . . From these the Grank Turk chooses whoever pleases him the most, and keeps her separate for two months, and amuses himself with her as he pleases; if she become pregnant, he takes her as his consort, otherwise he marries her to one of his men. . . .[29]



According to Guillaume Postel, a richly caparisoned carriage, accompanied by four or five eunuchs, would transport a newly chosen concubine to the sultan's residence.[30] Even after the integration of the sultan's domestic household into the imperial palace, the Old Palace continued to be a source of concubines for the sultan. Describing the Old Palace, John Sanderson, a member of the English embassy at the end of the sixteenth century, commented that "the virgins of the Grand Sig[no]r remaine ther. Thether he goeth many tims upon pleasure. . . ."[31]

The fact that extensive repair and expansion took place in the New Palace harem quarters in the late 1520s[32] suggests that Süleyman was planning at that time to move at least some part of his harem to the New Palace. Hurrem Sultan was probably the first female of consequence to live in the sultan's palace. As we have seen in Chapter 3, she and her children appear to have been living there by 1534. Süleyman's mother Hafsa Sultan may also have taken up residence in the New Palace before her death in March 1534, although there is no evidence to demonstrate this. Following his father's precedent, Selim II kept his *haseki* Nurbanu in the New Palace.[33] Since Selim's younger sons also lived at the palace,[34] it is likely that their mothers lived there as well. In 1573, a year before Selim's death, Costantino Garzoni reported that the harem quarters in the New Palace were small (housing 150 women) in comparison with the Old Palace (whose female population he sets at 1500, a gross exaggeration). The harem under Selim II was indeed small—a palace salary register at the time of Selim's death shows a harem population of forty-nine women in the New Palace and seventy-three in the Old Palace (not counting members of the royal family).[35] Garzoni also noted that the sultan entered the harem at night, suggesting that his formal residence was still the third courtyard.[36]

From the beginning of Murad III's reign in 1574, privy purse registers record steadily growing numbers of women present in the New Palace. Over the course of Murad's twenty-one year reign, the population of the New Palace harem grew to several times the size of Selim II's harem (see table). Because of the extensive renovation and expansion of the harem that took place during his reign, the New Palace was better able to accommodate a larger harem population than before. An eyewitness account of the departure from the New Palace of Murad's concubines at his death in 1595 suggests that the entire royal family was then resident in the New Palace:

> Directly after these poor princes [Murad's nineteen executed sons] . . . had been buried, the populace waited at the gate to witness the departure from the Seraglio of their mothers and all the other wives of the king, with their children and their goods. All the carriages, coaches, mules, and horses of the court were employed for the purpose. Besides the wives of the king and the 27 daughters, there were 200 others, consisting of nurses and slaves and they were taken to the Eschi Seraglio [the Old Palace]. . . .[37]

Growth of the Harem as Reflected in Privy Purse Registers

| | New Palace | | Old Palace | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Date of register* | *Harem Population* | *Monthly stipend expenditure (in aspers)* | *Harem Population* | *Monthly stipend expenditure (in aspers)* | *Harem Population* | *Monthly stipend expenditure (in aspers)* |
| 1552 | —* | —* | 167 | 24,360 | 167 | 24,360 |
| 1575 | 49 | 12,510 | 73 | 7,470 | 122 | 19,980 |
| 1581–1582 | 104 | 27,180 | 146 | 19,320 | 250 | 46,500 |
| 1600–1601 | 275 | 52,373 | 298 | 52,740 | 583 | 104,113 |
| 1603–1604 | 276 (10 | 64,855 10,500) | 334 | 65,330 | 610 | 130,185 |
| 1612 | —† (10 | 56,913 15,342) | —† (8 | 107,031 16,500) | —† (18 | 163,944 31,842) |
| 1622 | 295 (47 | 112,570 61,900) | 411 (17 | 128,520 26,130) | 705 (64 | 241,090 88,030) |
| 1633 | 433 (65 | 136,470 59,970) | 412 (19 | 120,450 36,420) | 845 (84 | 256,920 96,390) |
| 1639–1640 | —† (102 | 169,037 77,760) | —† (18 | 125,010 34,700) | —† (120 | 294,047 112,460) |
| 1647–1648 | —† (147 | 233,916 133,408) | —† (21 | 142,827 30,612) | —† (168 | 376,743 164,020) |
| 1652 | 436 (142 | 206,258 131,085) | 531 (16 | 128,505 25,050) | 967 (156 | 334,763 156,135) |

Figures do not include active or retired *valide sultans*, *hasekis*, harem stewardesses, or nurses. Figures in parentheses indicate the portion of the harem population represented by the household staff, the *Dar üs-Saade*.

*Although Hurrem Sultan and her suite were living in the New Palace, the register lists them as resident in the Old Palace.

†No figures are given in the register.

The information in this table is drawn from the following registers in the Prime Ministry Archives: Maliyeden Müdevver Nos. 487 (1575), 422 (1581–1582), 5633 (1600–1601), 843 (1612), 847A (1622), 2079 (1633), 1692 (1647–1648), 774 (1652); Ali Emiri, Kanuni No. 24 (1552); Kamil Kepeci No. 7104A (1639–40). The data for 1603–1604 is from an unidentified register published by Barkan ("İstanbul Saraylarına ait Muhasebe Defterleri," 155).

As this account indicates, once it became accepted practice for the extended family of the sultan to reside with him in the New Palace, the Old Palace became the home principally for retired harems. Henceforth, upon a sultan's death, the women associated with him—his servants, his mother (should she outlive him), and his concubines, as well as their servants and suites—would be transported to the Old Palace. A sultan's unmarried daughters would accompany their mothers to the Old Palace, and so, presumably, would princes who were considered too young to be separated from their mothers and governesses. For many members of the harem of a deceased sultan, marriages would be arranged with suitable men in the service of the state; at the time of her marriage, a slave woman would customarily be manumitted and provided with a dowry.



As a rule, it was considered unseemly for the mother of an Ottoman prince to be married, and so she might form the center of a court whose size and influence would depend upon the status she had acquired in her career in the New Palace. At times, when it housed more than one woman of considerable status, the Old Palace was undoubtedly a place of both ceremonial and political importance. In the early years of the reign of Osman II, for example, there were resident in the Old Palace two former *valide sultans*—Safiye Sultan, the once-powerful mother of the deceased Mehmed III, and the mother of the deposed but still living Mustafa—as well as Kösem Sultan, the influential *haseki* of the deceased Ahmed I, who would become *valide sultan* in a matter of years.

The Old Palace continued to serve as one of the focal points on the map of royal urban ritual. It was from there that the daughters of the sultans were married. In the post-Süleymanic period, princesses' weddings were celebrated with great pomp. They counted among the most important of the grand occasions that enabled the urban populace to take pride in the magnificence of its sovereign house. These weddings were ceremonial events in their own right, no longer occurring as adjunct to the circumcision of a prince, as the wedding of Süleyman's only daughter Mihrimah had been to the celebration of her brother Bayezid's circumcision in 1539. Occasionally, the entire domestic household of the sultan removed to the Old Palace for the wedding celebrations. During the festivities leading statesmen and religious dignitaries as well as their harems were formally received and feasted.[38]

The weddings of Murad III's daughters in particular were splendid events centered on the Old Palace. It was from there that Ayşe Sultan was married in 1586 to İbrahim Pasha, governor of Egypt,[39] who would serve three times as grand vezir to Ayşe's brother Mehmed III, and that Fatma Sultan was married in 1593 to the admiral Halil Pasha.[40] The historian Selaniki described the excitement of the crowds who turned out to watch the elaborate processional that carried Fatma Sultan, who was concealed behind a screen of red satin, to the palace of her new husband. On such festive occasions, the lucky onlooker might receive one of the coins distributed as tokens of the dynasty's beneficence (and perhaps also as a means of ensuring a sizeable and appreciative audience); Selaniki wrote that at the wedding of Fatma Sultan "skirtfulls of shiny new coins were distributed . . . those who did not receive any sighed with longing."[41] The ceremonial importance of the Old Palace continued into the seventeenth century: when Ahmed I's daughter Hanzade Sultan was married in 1623 to Bayram, agha of the Janissaries, she was escorted from the Old Palace by the vezirs, who walked on foot at the head of the bridal procession.[42]

The Old Palace was also one of the several places in Istanbul to which the sultans were in the habit of going periodically for what Selaniki called a "change of air." Sanderson noted that it was not only the presence of his concubines that drew Mehmed III frequently to the Old Palace, but also its "faire lodginges, great orchards, many banias [baths], cleare fountayns."[43] Selaniki tells us that in 1597 Mehmed moved to the Old Palace in "perfect spendor and magnificence," where he spent the month of October in pursuit of "tranquillity and repose," although his sojourn there began with a great

show of fireworks "the resounding echo of [whose] dreadful crashing caused commotion to the farthest point in the heavens."[44] Gradually, however, the Old Palace seems to have diminished in status, although it continued through the seventeenth century to house larger numbers of women than did the New Palace: in 1622, there were 411 women in the Old Palace harem and 295 in the New Palace; in 1652, the numbers were 531 and 436, respectively.[45] An official memorandum written at midcentury by the *valide sultan* Turhan to the grand vezir scolded him for neglect of the Old Palace: "There is not enough firewood in the Old Palace to boil soup! What's the reason for this? Is it not a royal palace?"[46]

A question that must be asked is why Mehmed the Conqueror separated the residence of the sultan's family from his own and why Süleyman and his successors reintegrated the two royal households.[47] The answer may lie, in part at least, in the system of dynastic reproduction followed in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This system created a structural separation between the sultan and the mothers of his children, whose roles were defined through their relation to their children, in particular their sons. This separation was echoed in the structuring of the royal family's residences. The New Palace was the center of government and a world of men, the second courtyard publicly devoted to affairs of the empire, and the inner sanctuary of the third courtyard—an all-male *harem*—devoted to preparing youths for service to the empire. In the fifteenth century the function of the sultan's residence was increasingly defined by the expanding apparatus of government—which because of the central role created for the household slaves of the sultan (*kapıkulu*) by Mehmed II, meant the expansion of the imperial residence. The function of the Old Palace was to house, nurture, and educate the sultan's family and its female servants. The fact that the sultan's formal role in sustaining the dynasty—fathering its sons and daughters—was accomplished in the New Palace highlights the functional separation of the two royal households.

The phases of a concubine's career could be marked by her passage between the two households. During her training in the Old Palace, she was defined by her subordination to its senior female members and the yet undecided nature of her future career. If she was chosen by the sultan for his bed, she was transported to the New Palace. There, for a brief period, she was defined solely by her relationship to the sultan: she was his sexual partner. If she became pregnant, she acquired a functional role that required her return to the Old Palace, where she was endowed with her own quarters and attendants. If her child was male, she and he would eventually leave the Old Palace to form a new shared household in a provincial capital. If the concubine did not become pregnant, the sultan would marry her off to one of his slaves, an indication that there was no role within the dynastic household for a childless, therefore functionless, concubine. Süleyman's singling out of one woman as *haseki* extended the sexual phase of the concubine's career into a permanent relationship; her residence in the sultan's palace was a corollary of that relationship. Correspondingly, the rule for residence in the Old Palace in the post-Süleymanic period became the absence of a relationship with the sultan: it was



the home of the harems of deceased rulers and a training school for young slave women.

The integration of the harem into the New Palace was completed with the transfer of the sultan's primary residence from the third courtyard into the harem precinct. While Süleyman and especially Selim II undoubtedly spent considerable time within the harem, their principal quarters were the privy chamber in the third courtyard, where they were attended by the elite of the pages in training. The transfer occurred in a definitive fashion when Murad III had constructed within the harem precinct exquisitely decorated quarters for himself and a majestic hall where receptions and entertainments could be held with the inhabitants of the harem. The fact that, while the new royal quarters were undergoing construction, Murad removed to the Old Palace together with his harem[48] rather than to the third courtyard, underlines the degree to which the female rather than the male harem had become the primary residence of the sultan.

It was necessary that the harem provide an environment suitable for the monarch. Much of its growth and structural development in the reign of Murad and subsequent sultans came about for this reason. The sultan's new residence—the second imperial harem—was styled after the first, especially with regard to the functional definition of the sultan's personal servants. In addition, the harem acquired its own corps of eunuchs. By 1594 the black eunuchs had been removed from the jurisdiction of the agha of the Gate of Good Fortune (*Bab üs-Saade*), white eunuch head of the third courtyard. They were structured into a hierarchy of offices under their commanding officer, the agha of the Abode of Good Fortune (Dar üs-Saade), and occupied quarters that formed a boundary between the harem and the second, semi-public, courtyard.[49]

## Hierarchy of the Harem Institution: The Family Elite

In the privy purse registers of the period under study, harem residents were listed in three categories, which we can assume represented the broad divisions within the institution. The first of these was the elite of the harem: those carrying the title "Sultan" (the *valide sultan,* the *haseki sultan,* and princes and princesses) and, after 1620 or so, the sultan's wet nurse (*daye khatun*), and the harem stewardess, chief officer of the institution (*ketkhüda khatun*). The second was a middle group composed of the harem's administrative and training staff and other women of some status. The final, and largest, group was the rank-and-file service corps. The outstanding revelation of these registers is the extraordinary status within the dynastic family of the *haseki* and especially the *valide sultan.*

The hierarchy of the harem institution was recognized and symbolized by the daily stipends (*mevacib*) paid to each of its members from the imperial treasury. Nearly every member of the governing elite, including members of the dynasty, received a stipend from the empire's treasuries. Even the sultan, who in theory held the empire's wealth as his personal possession and for

whom a stipend would thus not be appropriate, was assigned "pocket money." In some cases *mevacib* constituted one's wage, remuneration for actual service, while in other cases it was an honorary stipend (as in the case of an infant prince or princess). The *mevacib* of a high-ranking Ottoman, male or female, did not represent his or her total wealth, which might consist also (and in some cases exclusively) of land grants, tax concessions, and the like. But while one's *mevacib* was not a reliable index of total monetary worth, it was a reliable index of status, and it is as such that the stipends of harem members will be considered in the following discussion. Information in the privy purse registers, especially stipend figures, forms the basis for this discussion of the harem hierarchy, which begins with the family elite.

## The *Valide Sultan*

The supreme position of the *valide sultan* was the keystone of the harem institution. She was invested with guardianship of the royal family as well as with administrative control of the day-to-day functioning of the harem household. The *valide sultan*'s superior status as the most important and powerful member of the dynastic family within the harem was acknowledged by her stipend, the highest in the empire. Nurbanu Sultan, mother of Murad III and the first *valide sultan* to govern the harem institution in the post-Süleymanic period, was assigned a daily stipend of 2,000 aspers.[50] Mehmed III raised this stipend to 3,000 aspers for his mother Safiye Sultan, Nurbanu's daughter-in-law and successor as *valide sultan*. This increase was awarded on the eve of Mehmed's departure from Istanbul on the Erlau campaign, about a year and a half after his accession,[51] and was no doubt meant to signal the authority the sultan delegated to his mother in his absence. Safiye's stipend appears not to have been reduced upon Mehmed's return to the capital; privy purse registers indicate that she continued to receive 3,000 aspers a day throughout her son's reign.[52] In contrast, the highest stipends of leading public officials listed in the privy purse registers are those of the *müfti* (750 aspers a day), the chief justices of Rumeli and Anatolia (572 and 563 aspers, respectively), and the Janissary agha (500 aspers).[53] The stipends of the members of the imperial council are not listed in these registers, but if the information of John Sanderson is correct, the vezirial stipend at the end of the sixteenth century was 1,000 aspers a day. According to Sanderson, the sultan allowed himself only 1,001 aspers.[54] This 1:3 ratio between the stipends of the sultan and his mother is the same as that between Süleyman's princely stipend in Manisa and the stipend of his mother Hafsa, suggesting that it may have been a standard multiplier within the dynastic family.[55]

The *valide sultan*'s stipend remained at this extraordinarily high level with two brief exceptions. These two exceptions suggest that not all *valide sultans* were equal and that a powerful *valide sultan* could extend her influence beyond her natural term of office—the reign of her son—thus confining the status of her successor. The extraordinary prestige of Safiye, who dominated the sultanate of her son, was reflected in the fact that she continued to receive a daily stipend of 3,000 aspers after her removal to the Old Palace following



Mehmed's death in 1603,[56] while her successor in office Handan Sultan, mother of the new sultan, Ahmed I, received only 1,000 aspers.[57] Handan Sultan is a pale figure in this period of colorful women. Her inferior status as *valide sultan* was no doubt a result, in part at least, of her inferior status as concubine; Mehmed had elevated none of his concubines to the status of *haseki*, and so Handan was deprived of the kind of recognition enjoyed by Nurbanu and Safiye before their sons' sultanates. Furthermore, Handan died two years after her fourteen-year-old son Ahmed I took the throne, and therefore did not have much opportunity to develop an influential presence as *valide sultan*. In reaction to his grandmother Safiye's domination of his father, Ahmed appears to have deliberately downplayed the *valide sultan*'s role, and perhaps lowered his mother's stipend accordingly.

When Ahmed's brother Mustafa became sultan in 1617, his mother—whose name is lost to history[58]—received 3,000 aspers as *valide sultan*[59] although her mother-in-law Safiye was still alive.[60] However, she received only 2,000 aspers during her retirement in the Old Palace between her son's two reigns;[61] during the first months of Mustafa's mother's retirement Safiye was still alive, perhaps a neighbor in the Old Palace, receiving 3,000 aspers a day. While Mustafa's mother, as a concubine of Mehmed III, had suffered the same obscurity as Handan, she was clearly able to command greater status as *valide sultan* than her fellow concubine had. This was probably in large measure because she exercised power more directly, acting as regent for her mentally incompetent son.

Like Safiye, Kösem Sultan's prestige as *valide sultan* overshadowed that of her daughter-in-law, Turhan. Kösem, who had enjoyed considerable status as the favorite of Ahmed I, was for twenty-five years a powerful *valide sultan* to her sons Murad IV and İbrahim. In 1648, when Mehmed IV succeeded his father İbrahim at the age of seven, his grandmother did not retire to the Old Palace as custom required, but stayed on as "great *valide sultan*." Mehmed's own mother Turhan received the title *valide sultan*, but was distinctly subordinate to her mother-in-law, a state of affairs underlined by the fact that Kösem continued to receive her stipend of 3,000 aspers while Turhan received only 2,000 aspers.[62] When, after Kösem's death in 1651, Turhan became head of the harem institution, her stipend was immediately raised to 3,000 aspers.[63]

## The *Haseki*

According to the criterion of stipend, the *haseki*, or favorite concubine, enjoyed the greatest status in the imperial harem after the *valide sultan*. The *haseki*, a slave concubine and no blood relation to the reigning sultan, ranked higher than the sultan's own sisters and aunts, the princesses of the dynasty. Her elevated royal status derived from the fact that she was the mother of a potential future sultan. In 1575, just after Murad III's accession, his *haseki* Safiye Sultan received a stipend of 700 aspers a day, while his sister İsmihan Sultan, wife of the esteemed grand vezir Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, received only 300 aspers, and his sister Gevherhan Sultan, wife of the vezir Piyale Pasha, 250 aspers. Murad's aunt, Mihrimah Sultan, daughter of Süleyman and

Hurrem Sultan, widow of the grand vezir Rüstem Pasha, and an extremely powerful woman in her own right, received 600 aspers in her retirement in the Old Palace, the highest stipend awarded any princess in the period covered by this study.[64] Even later, when sharp distinctions of rank ceased to be made among the sultan's concubines and the title *haseki* no longer meant "favorite," royal concubines continued to rank higher than princesses: in 1643, the two concubines of İbrahim received 1,000 and 1,300 aspers a day, respectively, while the maximum stipend for princesses, including İbrahim's sisters Ayşe, Fatma, and Hanzade, was 400 aspers.[65]

When Süleyman was princely governor and clearly his father's heir, his mother Hafsa received a stipend of 200 aspers a day.[66] Süleyman's *haseki* Hurrem, received a stipend of 2,000 aspers a day, at least toward the end of her career.[67] After her death, this extraordinary sum was granted only to the *valide sultan,* while the standard *haseki* stipend in the following century was only half that amount: 1,000 aspers a day. Only two departures from this practice appear to have occurred. First, Safiye Sultan received only 700 aspers as *haseki,* whereas her predecessor Nurbanu had received 1,000 aspers.[68] While this would seem unusual in view of Murad's intense devotion to his favorite concubine, it may represent a scaling down of the *haseki*'s stipend in relation to that of the *valide sultan,* for there had been no *valide sultan* when Nurbanu was *haseki.* The second departure from the norm occurred in 1633, when Murad IV raised the *haseki* stipend to 2,000 aspers, where it remained throughout his reign.[69] This increase was most likely linked to a general increase in stipends throughout the palace during Murad's reign, described by Koçi Bey,[70] and was accompanied by a marked growth in the size of the harem. These changes were probably an aspect of Murad's dramatic assertion of personal control of government after nine years of his mother's regency. Curiously, despite İbrahim's notorious squandering of the empire's treasury on extravagances of the harem, the *haseki* stipend was returned to 1,000 aspers during his reign.[71]

The rule seems to have been once a *haseki,* always a *haseki:* a favorite maintained her status even in retirement (which could occur only after the emergence of seniority as a principle of succession, when a prince's mother might mark time in the Old Palace between the death of her master and the accession of her son). Kösem continued to receive the *haseki*'s standard stipend of 1,000 aspers[72] for the five years of her retirement between the death of Ahmed I and the accession of her eldest son Murad IV. Even Ayşe, the relatively obscure *haseki* of Osman II, received this amount for more than eighteen years after the sultan's death, despite the fact that she had no sons to lend her prestige as a potential *valide sultan.*[73] The fact that the *hasekis* of Murad IV and İbrahim received only 100 aspers in retirement[74] is further evidence that the special status of the *haseki* began to disappear toward the mid-seventeenth century.

## The Royal Concubine of Non-*Haseki* Status

Concubines who were not favorites of the sultan in the century following the deaths of Süleyman and Hurrem tend to be the forgotten women of the harem. We are aware of them only when the vagaries of succession catapulted them into the public eye. Their status relative to their favored colleagues, as reflected in their stipends, was distinctly inferior. They were often not listed among the family elite of the harem, and are discussed here principally to demonstrate the unusual status of the *haseki.*



While Hurrem received a daily stipend of 2,000 aspers toward the end of her career,[75] the customary stipend for the concubine mother of a prince at that time was 30 or 40 aspers.[76] At the end of Selim II's reign, the *haseki* Nurbanu received 1,000 aspers a day, while Selim's other consorts, each the mother of a son, received only 40 aspers.[77] The mother of Mustafa I, concubine of Mehmed III, received 100 aspers a day between Mehmed's death and Mustafa's accession, while the *haseki* Kösem received 1,000 aspers a day at a parallel point in her career.[78] With respect to stipend, mothers of princes before the reign of Süleyman probably did not enjoy a status much greater than that of these women: in 1513, as the mother of the heir apparent (Süleyman), Hafsa Sultan received a stipend of 150 aspers a day.[79] The gap between Hafsa's stipend and Hurrem's stipend of 2000 aspers a day at a parallel point in her career only forty years later further underlines the exceptional nature of Süleyman's treatment of Hurrem.

The manner in which the sultan's concubines were listed in privy purse registers sheds light on the manner in which they must have been perceived in the hierarchy of the harem. Favorites were listed as "haseki sultan" or, in retirement, "*haseki* of the deceased Sultan X"—suggesting that the individual's fundamental relationship was with the sultan himself. Other concubine mothers of sons were listed as "the mother of Prince X" (*valide-i Sultan X*)—suggesting that the individual had no special relationship with the sultan, but only with a potential sultan, her son. Concubines who were the mothers of daughters only were not even listed individually in the privy purse registers, suggesting that they were perceived as enjoying no empowering relationship within the dynastic family.

The fact that so little is known about these concubines of non-*haseki* rank should not lead us to assume that they were completely deprived of status and power, however. That they enjoyed the prerogatives of a member of the royal family is suggested by the fact that Şemsiruhsar Khatun, one of the many concubines of Murad III and the mother of a daughter, created an endowment for the recitation of the Qur'an in the mosque of the Prophet in Medina.[80] These women, especially the mothers of princes, were surely not political ciphers, since their sons were the magnets around which factions opposed to the sultan or the heir apparent gathered. The popularity of Mahmud, son of Mehmed III, outside the palace, which led to his own and his mother's execution on grounds of suspected treason, testifies to the possibility of such political leverage; had Mahmud not been executed, his mother might have played an important role as *valide sultan.*

As we have seen, toward the middle of the seventeenth century the special status of the *haseki* and the gross salary differences that had characterized the harem hierarchy of previous reigns began to disappear. What emerged was a

system in which royal concubines began to enjoy roughly equal status, diminished from the lofty level of the *haseki* but improved over the neglected position of the non-*haseki*. At midcentury, seven of İbrahim's eight concubines received stipends of 1,000 aspers a day and the other concubine 1,300 aspers.[81] Toward the end of the century, in 1690, the six *kadıns* of Süleyman II, including the head *kadın*, received gifts of equal amounts—one purse plus 100 *kuruş*—on the occasion of the court's departure for a sojourn in Edirne;[82] the same amount was given to the four princes and one princess resident in the palace, suggesting an improvement in the status of royal offspring vis-à-vis that of royal concubines. Unfortunately, Süleyman's mother, Saliha Dilaşub, had died the previous year, so we do not know how much larger the *valide sultan*'s gift would have been; however, a gift of five purses was awarded the harem stewardess, who had replaced the deceased *valide sultan* as head of the harem institution.[83]

We must not, however, exaggerate the equitability of the pattern that emerged as the age of the *haseki* drew to a close. In all likelihood absolute equality never obtained among royal concubines—at the very least the head consort must have enjoyed some privileges, and a sultan must have been able in some way to enhance the status of a particular favorite, perhaps through promotion to a vacancy created by the death of a woman with greater seniority. That there was some variation among concubines is suggested by the sizes of the suites of the six consorts (*kadın*) of Mahmud I toward the mid-eighteenth century: the head consort (*baş kadın*) had twenty attendants, the second *kadın* eleven, the third fourteen, the forth eight, the fifth ten, and the sixth twelve.[84]

## Princess and Prince

The Ottoman princess of this period appears to have enjoyed little status within the harem. It was only with marriage to high-ranking statesmen that princesses were able to play a role of any significance and thus to acquire recognition. This change of status was reflected in their stipends: until they left the imperial palace as married women, they received 100 aspers a day, but upon their marriage they would begin to receive 300 or 400 aspers a day in addition to a generous household allowance. From the point of view of stipend, princesses were not worse off than their brothers: princes resident in the palace also received only 100 aspers a day in this period. These stipends of the royal offspring were strikingly small in comparison to the stipends of other harem residents, including those of nonfamily members of the royal family household. Nor, while they were resident within the palace, were their stipends supplemented by the income from land grants or other such sources. Perhaps this lack of status resulted from a view of the royal offspring as not yet in the actual service of the dynasty. Once a princess proved useful to the dynasty through her marriage, her status improved considerably; a key factor here was that she was now mistress of a household. The actual service of a prince of course raised him to the loftiest station in the empire. The low stipend status of princes and princesses was not peculiar to the late sixteenth century; as princely governor in Manisa and heir apparent, Süleyman received a stipend of 67 aspers and an unmarried sister who accompanied her brother and mother to Manisa 40 aspers.



## The *Daye Khatun*

The sultan's relationship with his wet nurse was considered one of filiation. When a sultan's mother predeceased him, his *daye* assumed a ceremonial role as maternal mentor. The importance of the *daye khatun* was not just a phenomenon of the expanded harem in the post-Süleymanic period. Ümm Gülsüm Khatun, the *daye* of Mehmed II, conqueror of Constantinople, was sufficiently endowed with income by the sultan to undertake the construction of two mosques in Istanbul and one in Edirne; the neighborhood surrounding the latter came to bear her name.[85] Her importance may have been due to the fact that Mehmed's mother died three years before he became sultan. The *daye* of Osman II performed the role of maternal stand-in during the last two years of the reign of the young sultan, after his mother died; during this time she received a stipend of 1,000 aspers a day, five times the *daye*'s normal stipend.[86]

Befitting her status, the *daye khatun* was usually married to a high-ranking state official. Like princesses of the dynasty, she thus functioned as a potential link between the dynastic family and its servants. The Venetian ambassador Garzoni reported in 1573 that Selim II "spends the greater part of his time playing chess with the mother of Ahmed Pasha, an elderly woman who was formerly his nurse, and delighting in witticisms that she is accustomed to telling him."[87] Selim and his *daye* had other ties: she was married to the son of one of Bayezid II's daughters, and her son, Şemsi Ahmed Pasha, was a royal confidant of the sultan. The daughter of Mehmed III's *daye* was married to Lala Mehmed Pasha, who rose to serve as grand vezir, although only for a matter of days before he suddenly died.[88] The husband of Murad IV's *daye* rose to the positions of head chancellor (*nişancı*) and governor of Egypt.[89]

## The *Ketkhuda Khatun*

While she had no family tie with the sultan, by the second decade of the seventeenth century the harem stewardess was also listed in privy purse registers among the family elite. This was in part because of her exalted position as the senior administrative officer of the harem institution and her role in training the women who personally served the sultan. Like the *daye khatun*, the *ketkhüda khatun* (or *kâhya kadın*) had been an important figure in earlier times: the position appears in registers from the reigns of Bayezid II and Selim I.[90]

The prestige of this office in the post-Süleymanic period was boosted by the career of Janfeda Khatun, the powerful harem stewardess during the reign of Murad III. According to the historian Mustafa Ali, the *valide sultan* Nurbanu had Janfeda brought from the Old Palace and put in charge of the training of forty slave women, including those destined for the sultan's personal service. On her deathbed Nurbanu enjoined her son to place control of

the harem in Janfeda's hands, which Murad proceeded to do.[91] Janfeda Khatun was in all likelihood the first official *ketkhüda khatun* of the New Palace harem. The responsibilities of this office appear to have expanded to include management of the assignment of jobs, and the training and the promotion of all women in the harem household. Its principal function, however, seems to have remained the training of the select group who personally served the *valide sultan* and the sultan.[92]

Like the *daye khatun,* the *ketkhüda khatun* also possessed the status and the wherewithall to undertake public works: Janfeda Khatun built a mosque and a public fountain in Istanbul as well as another mosque and public bath in a village in the suburbs of the city.[93] Janfeda's retirement stipend was a handsome 100 aspers a day, but when this amount proved insufficient for the public works she wished to undertake, it was doubled.[94] Janfeda's mosques were constructed after the death of Nurbanu Sultan, suggesting that the *ketkhüda khatun* could, like the *daye khatun,* assume the *valide sultan*'s prerogatives in the event of her death. It is no doubt this role as stand-in for the *valide sultan,* in her capacity both as mother of the sultan and as head of the harem institution, that allowed the *daye khatun* and the *kethüda khatun* to be counted as members of the family elite.

## The Hierarchy of the Harem: The Household

As the number of high-ranking members of the royal family resident in the imperial harem increased, so perforce did the household required to maintain this organization of growing complexity. Privy purse registers list the harem household in two divisions, which we might term the household staff and the household domestics. The latter consisted of the women and girls who performed the menial tasks of the harem—the preparation and service of food, the laundry, the cleaning, the tending of fires, the maintenance of the baths, and so forth—and who, as the lowest ranking members of a particular individual's suite, did the bidding of their superiors. In the official hierarchy of the harem, they were known as *jariyes.*[95] While the technical meaning of the term *jariye* is "female slave," it, like the term *kul* for men, could also be used loosely to refer to any female subject of the sultan, including the women of his family.[96] In a context such as that of the harem hierarchy, however, where an office or position of any status tended to be marked by a title, the *jariye* was clearly a person who lacked status.

The term "household staff" is used here to refer to those nonfamily harem residents holding a position in the harem that was dignified by a title and, usually, by a stipend greater than that of the rank-and-file *jariye.* This group begins to emerge as a distinct and significant element in the harem hierarchy at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when privy purse registers refer to it as the *Dar üs-Saade,* literally, the "Abode of Good Fortune."[97] *Dar üs-Saade* is a term with several layers of meaning, denoting variously the imperial capital, the imperial palace, and the harem quarters within the palace. Each of these is a space that constitutes an "abode of good fortune" because it is inhabited by the person of the sultan. In privy purse registers of Süleyman's reign, the term *Dar üs-Saade* is used to refer inclusively to all residents of the harem, family and household alike.[98] The later restriction of the term to the household staff suggests that the emergence of this specially identified group was stimulated not only by the sheer growth in numbers of the harem population but also, and more important, by the harem's transformation into a division of the imperial palace and its growing importance as a training school. The similarities between the structure of the household staff and that of the staff of the privy chamber, the sultan's residence in the third courtyard, provide further support for the hypothesis that the elaboration of this element of the harem institution was a result not only of the harem's growth in general but also of the sultan's presence within it. The special title of this group, *Dar üs-Saade,* suggests that it was the core, or defining, group of the harem institution.

The *Dar üs-Saade* was not an unprecedented element in the harem hierarchy that emerged at the turn of the century. A special group of "distinguished" persons (*jemaat-i müteferrika*) had existed under Süleyman—and perhaps earlier. These were individuals of some status who were grouped separately in privy purse registers, neither with the family (princes, princesses, their mothers, and their governesses and wet nurses), nor with the rank-and-file *jariyes.* This group may have been a parallel to the *müteferrika* corps in the palace outer service, a kind of miscellaneous group of persons of some status.[99] In a 1552 register, this group, which included two men, consisted of Gülfem Khatun (an individual with considerable status in Süleyman's harem whose precise function is unclear—perhaps she was the harem stewardess),[100] the nurse of Süleyman's deceased son Mehmed, the mother of Mehmed's daughter, the tutor of Süleyman's youngest son Jihangir, and the imam of the palace. Their stipends ranged from Gülfem Khatun's 150 aspers a day to the imam's 10 aspers, at a time when the average *jariye* stipend was 6 aspers.[101] In 1599–1600 the *Dar üs-Saade,* or household staff, consisted of ten unspecified individuals, all of whose stipends were 40 aspers a day—a group not much larger than the *müteferrika* of Süleyman's day.[102] However, although the *müteferrika* may have formed a precedent for the *Dar üs-Saade,* the fact that the latter expanded rapidly during the first half of the seventeenth century suggests that it was a body constituted with a different, or at least a more consciously dignified, purpose. This is supported by the appearance in privy purse registers of 1612 of a group of the same name—Dar üs-Saade—in the Old Palace harem, a dozen years or more after the group's emergence in the principal harem.[103]

The household staff grew not only in size but in range of personnel. By 1612, it still consisted of ten persons, but there were now three levels of stipend: 100, 60, and 40 aspers a day.[104] By 1620 it consisted of forty-seven persons, with six stipend levels: 200, 100, 60, 40, 20, and 15 aspers.[105] By 1640, the end of the reign of Murad IV, the household staff had doubled to 102 persons,[106] and by the mid-seventeenth century it consisted of approximately 140 persons at twelve different stipend levels ranging from 200 to 13 aspers.[107] Throughout the period, the stipends of greatest frequency were 40, 20, and 15

aspers, while the number of persons receiving stipends greater than 40 aspers typically ranged between eight and ten until the very end of the period, when it grew to sixteen. While the range of *Dar üs-Saade* stipend increased, there appears to have been no rise in stipend during this period, although an individual might work her way up the household hierarchy; from the beginning to the middle of the seventeenth century, the average *jariye* stipend, however, increased by 25 percent from 6.8 to 8.5 aspers. The multiplicity of stipend levels suggests that the household staff was characterized by an increasingly well-defined functional or status hierarchy.

Unfortunately, privy purse registers after the reign of Süleyman do not indicate who the members of the household staff were. The group most certainly included the administrative/supervisory officers, those high-ranking women who personally served the sultan and his mother and who were responsible for training promising young *jariyes*. It is likely that it also included women who had attained a certain status through a personal relationship with the sultan but had not been sufficiently honored to be regarded officially as a member of the royal family. Some idea of the composition of this group is suggested by an important document of the mid-eighteenth century: a list of the nonfamily members of the New Palace harem by office or name and stipend.[108] The size of the harem as demonstrated in this document—444 women—and the stipend range—5 to 100 aspers a day—with 73 women receiving stipends at the *Dar üs-Saade* level (15 aspers or more) and 371 at the *jariye* level (10 aspers or less), are so close to the situation that existed in the previous century as to suggest that the harem underwent little change in its basic structure after an initial period of adjustment to its new location and role in the New Palace.[109]

The women receiving the highest stipends at the time the list was drawn up were the chief administrative/supervisory officers of the harem. The mistress of the palace (*saray ustası*), the mistress of the laundry (*çamesuy usta*), and mistress of the pantry (*kiler usta*) all received 100 aspers a day; the head scribe (*baş katibe*) and the "great mute coiffeur mistress" (*büyük dilsiz berber usta*) received 80 aspers; the second treasurer (*ikinci hazinedar*), the tasting mistress (*çaşnigir usta*), the coffee mistress (*kahveci usta*), and the mistress of the ablutions ewer (*ibrikdar usta*) received 50 aspers. This list of the top echelon of the eighteenth-century household staff is remarkably similar to a description, provided by Petis de la Croix in his memoirs, of the *valide sultan*'s attendants in the mid-seventeenth century: this group included the treasury mistress, the scribal mistress, the laundry mistress, the mistress of the box (whose office was probably connected with the royal bath), the bath mistress, the bath attendant, the tasting mistress, the coffee mistress, the pantry mistress, and the mistress of the ablutions ewer (Figure 5-1).[110]

Next in rank after the chief administrative/supervisory officers came four *ikbals*, who each received 40 aspers; *ikbals* were women singled out as favorite companions, perhaps concubines, of the sultan who were in line for promotion to the rank of *kadın*.[111] Also at the 40-asper rank were the stewards of six princesses living outside the New Palace,[112] as well as the second scribe, the

**Figure 5-1** The *valide sultan* attended by her suite. Enjoying a leisurely moment in one of the palace kiosks, the *valide sultan* takes a cup of coffee from one of her servants. Another fans her, while yet another holds an ornamented receptacle. A black eunuch stands in attendance at the right. From *Costumes Turcs de la cour et de la ville Constantinople, f.4. (Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris).*

head *jariye* of the personal suite of the harem stewardess, and the assistant mistress of the pantry. At lower ranks within the household staff were women in the personal suites of the various officers mentioned above or assigned directly to different service divisions within the harem, such as the pantry and the boiler room (*külhane*). For example, the mistress of the pantry had a *jariye* assigned to her personal service, while several other *jariyes* were assigned directly to the pantry. Also in the lower ranks of the group were governesses and wet nurses of the younger princes, *jariyes* in the suites of the older princes,[113] and women assigned to the chief officers of the black eunuch corps and other eunuch court companions of the sultan.

Simply listed by name in the document, with no function or assignment specified, are 167 *jariyes* (those receiving stipends of 10 aspers or less). Presumably this group was made up of those who performed the menial housekeeping tasks in the harem and perhaps also included newly acquired slave girls and women in the first stages of training. Another 185 *jariyes* are listed in the suites of various individuals or assigned directly to service divisions; while these women also received a maximum stipend of 10 aspers, it is possible that they were more advanced than the previous group in the training and service hierarchy of the harem. Of the suites to which these *jariyes* were assigned, those of the princes and the sultan's concubines (*kadıns*) were the largest,

with the former ranging from nineteen to seven women and the latter ranging from twenty to eight women. The suites of the *ikbals* ranged from six to four women. The harem officers also had women assigned to their personal service: the harem stewardess had four, the second treasurer three, while other leading officers—the tasting mistress and the mistresses of the palace, the laundry, and the pantry—had only one servant each. An interesting feature of the document is evidence that, at least at this time, the leading members of the black eunuch corps had members of the harem assigned to their service, perhaps to act as their deputies, since they ordinarily did not enter the harem proper. The chief black eunuch had five, while the second-in-command of the black eunuch corps had two, and the agha of the treasury four.

Several high-ranking harem women do not appear in this list. Indeed, its heading—"Names and daily wages of the *jariyes*"—suggests that it contains only the names of those who might be thought of as servants of the royal family. Its omissions are consonant with the bookkeeping traditions observed in seventeenth-century privy purse registers, where the three basic divisions among harem women are the royal family, the household staff, and the rank-and-file servants. Predictably, absent from the list are the six *kadıns*, the chief concubines of the sultan. Also absent are the harem stewardess and the wet nurse of the sultan. The latter two individuals were the members of the harem with the greatest status after the sultan's chief concubines. Their standing is revealed by the size of their stipends throughout most of the period in this study—200 aspers á day—as well as by the fact that around 1620 they began to be listed in privy purse registers together with family members rather than with the household staff.

## The Hierarchy of the Harem Institution: The Physical Structure

The physical layout of the New Palace harem quarters provides another dimension for understanding the hierarchical and functional divisions of the harem and the relationships among the women who lived there.[114] Unfortunately, because the harem underwent continual expansion, restructuring, and reorganization, it is hard to deduce from the structure of the palace as it exists today just what uses were made of some rooms and complexes of rooms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[115] The area of the harem housing the majority of women was destroyed by fire in 1665 and quickly rebuilt by Mehmed IV over the next few years. While in subsequent decades and centuries, accretions in the form mainly of additional stories and partitioning of existing rooms altered the appearance of much of the harem quarters, the basic structure of this area would seem to remain as it was when rebuilt in the 1660s, when Turhan Sultan was *valide sultan*.[116] The area of the harem inhabited by the women was bounded on its four sides by the quarters of the black eunuchs, a passageway separating the harem from the third courtyard, chambers constructed by individual sultans for their own use, and the outer wall of the harem, which looked down onto the sloping palace grounds and out to the mosque of Süleyman and the upper Golden Horn.



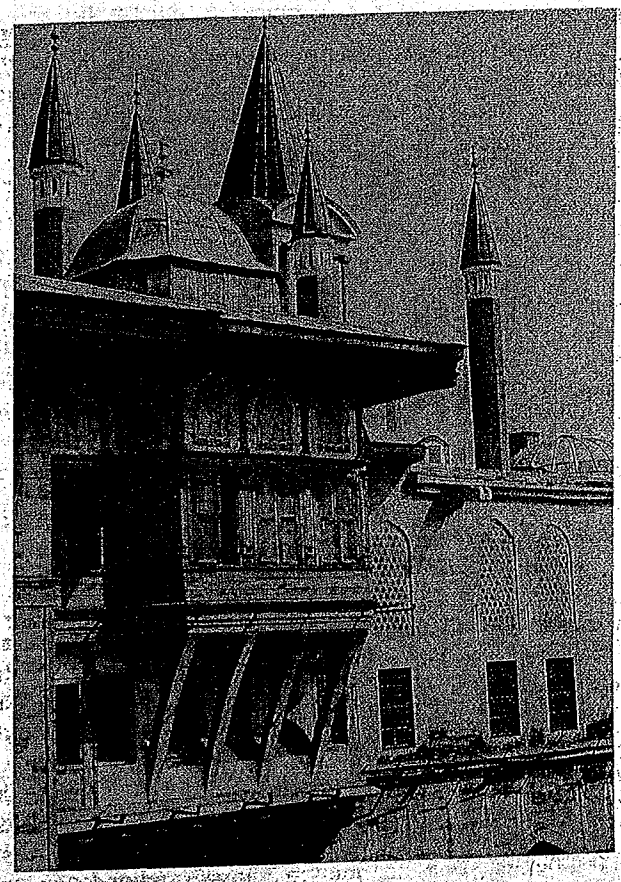

**Figure 5-2** External view of the *valide sultan*'s apartments. This photo, taken from the kiosk of Osman III within the harem section of the palace, shows the "tower of justice" atop the imperial council hall in the background and, on the right, the dormitories of harem servants and women in training. (*Photo by B. Dianne Mott*)

Dominating the women's quarters was the suite of the *valide sultan*. It was rivaled in size and splendor only by the apartments constructed by Murad III for his personal use (Figure 5-2). It consisted of a large salon and other smaller rooms, including a bedroom and a prayer room. It had three principal entrances: a corridor leading to a double bath (with one side for the *valide sultan* and the other for the sultan) and on to the great hall of the harem built by Murad III; an entrance from the corridor leading from the black eunuchs' innermost guardpost to the "courtyard of the *jariyes*," and an entrance from the large, centrally located, paved courtyard known as "the courtyard of the *valide*" (this courtyard and the rooms opening off it were probably the first structures in the New Palace harem).[117] In addition to these architecturally prominent entrances, the *valide sultan* also had access from within her apart-

ment to what is thought to have been a detention area or prison, located partially below her suite. Another route from her rooms to the quarters of the sultan led through a series of second-story rooms above her own; whoever occupied this series of linked rooms could be closely supervised by the *valide sultan.*[118]

The centrally located suite of the *valide sultan* divided the harem into two distinct areas. Between her rooms and the quarters of the black eunuchs lay the quarters of the *jariyes*, while on the other side of her rooms were situated the apartments of the sultan and of the young princes. The *valide sultan*'s suite can thus be thought of as dividing the harem into a "service wing" and a "family wing." Her central location allowed her to keep a watchful eye on both. Her means of access to all corners of the harem are concrete evidence of her roles as executive of the harem institution and guardian of the royal family. The physical structure of the harem suggests that it was the *valide sultan* rather than the sultan who was its dominant resident.

Each "wing" of the harem had a small number of elegant suites, clearly for women of distinguished status, although these in no way rivaled the splendor of the *valide sultan*'s suite or the rooms and pavilions constructed by the different sultans. In the "service wing," there were three such apartments, each consisting of a central salon with a balcony-like sleeping area and several secondary rooms, probably for the personal servants of the suite's mistress. These were the only suites in the harem of this period, in addition to those of the sultan and *valide sultan,* to have windows with a view of the outside world. Although it is not clear who occupied these suites, it seems likely that they belonged to the harem stewardess, who was in charge of the girls' training, and other leading administrative officers with supervisory duties. The "family wing" also contained elegant apartments, though with no outside view.[119] Since they are located under the quarters of princes and princesses, it seems likely that they belonged to the children's nurses and/or to the sultan's *hasekis*. Rooms with no outside view would have been appropriate for the sultan's concubines, who would have been the most strictly guarded of the harem's inhabitants; visual access to the outside world could more properly be permitted older women whose harem careers were devoid of a sexual component, such as the *valide sultan,* the harem stewardess, and other leading administrative officers. This is, however, only speculation.

Some residential features of the harem remain unexplained. Where, for example, did widowed or divorced princesses returning to the palace live? Perhaps the elegant suites were used by them on occasion. What is clear is that those residents of the harem who were not high-ranking concubines or officers lived a far less comfortable life than those who were more successful in their harem career. Descriptions of the harem as a congeries of cramped, dark rooms and corridors are inappropriate with regard to these successful women but accurate for the rank-and-file staff. In this respect, however, the imperial harem was probably very little different from any family in the empire wealthy enough to possess domestic slaves.



## The Harem as a Training Institution: Purpose and Organization

For the members of the dynastic family, the harem served as residence. For the servants of the royal family, it might best be described as a training institution. Young women were trained with the goal not only of providing suitable concubines for the sultan and attendants for his mother and other prominent harem women, but also of providing suitable wives for men near the top of the military/administrative hierarchies (the highest ranking officials would marry Ottoman princesses and their daughters). Just as the inner courtyard school prepared men through personal service to the sultan within his palace for service to the dynasty outside the palace, the harem prepared women through personal service to the sultan and his mother to take up their roles in the outer world. Manumitted and married to inner palace graduates and other officials, these women would in turn form harems that complemented the male households formed by their husbands. Marrying male and female slaves was an ancient practice that appears to have originated with the institution of elite slavery itself: the ninth-century Abbasid caliph Mu'tasim, whose Turkish slave guard was the earliest instance of the Islamic practice of elite slavery, married his soldiers to slave women of the same ethnic origin.[120] An example of an Ottoman slave alliance was that made for Pilak Mustafa Pasha, a minor vezir under Süleyman. A product of the inner palace school, Mustafa Pasha received a career boost through his marriage to a harem graduate: according to the historian Peçevi, "after he rose to the rank of governor general, he was married to a lady named Şahhûban, one of the slave women of the imperial harem, and because of this he was graced with the vezirate."[121]

Through these slave marriages, the organizational and educational pattern established by the sultan's household was replicated to form the social and political foundation of the Ottoman ruling class.[122] The palace system of training—for both men and women—had as one of its fundamental goals the inculcation of loyalty to the ruling house. Because women as well as men sustained the ties that bound the empire's elite, the focus of the latter's loyalty was not only the sultan himself but also the women of his household, that is, the dynastic family as a whole. Thus, when we examine the organization of the imperial harem and the relationships among its inhabitants, we observe not an isolated body but a matrix for the formation of a vital element of the ruling class.

A striking feature of the organizational elaboration of the harem after its move to the New Palace is its similarity to the organization of the pages and eunuchs who inhabited the third courtyard.[123] The sultan's new residence within the harem appears to have been tailored to resemble the old, with the crucial difference that the gender of his personal servants had changed. There were many parallels between the two organizations.[124]

A principal similarity was the multiplicity of ranks within each institution. According to Bobovius, whose informant was a woman who was married to an imperial cavalry officer of his acquaintance and who had served in the harem

in the suite of the *valide sultan* Kösem, "the women are separated in the palace into the same number of chambers as are the pages . . . . and they observe the same degrees of rank as obtain among the men."[125] As the ranks of female and male slaves-in-training were parallel, so were the career paths through the two institutions. Entry-level trainees in both organizations were grouped in two chambers known as the Greater Chamber (*büyük oda*) and the Lesser Chamber (*küçük oda*). Trainees would proceed to work their way up through the training/service divisions—in the third courtyard, the Campaign, Pantry, and Treasury Chambers, and in the harem the Pantry, Boiler, and Treasury Chambers.[126] Those who were not transferred out of the two institutions at intermediate levels—the men through assignment to a post in the outer palace service or to one of the imperial military forces, the women through marriage to these very men—rose to the top echelon of their respective institutions: the Privy Chamber and the *Dar üs-Saade*. The highest ranking members of these privileged groups carried similar titles, titles denoting service to the person of the sultan (in the case of the harem, to the person of the *valide sultan* as well): in the Privy Chamber, the keepers of the sultan's sword, garments, and linen, his stirrup-holder, and his private secretary, and in the harem the coiffeur, tasting, and coffee mistresses, the mistress of the ablutions ewer, and the scribe.

The similarity between the hierarchies of the two inner-palace institutions is underlined by the similarity in their stipend levels. It appears that the "horizontal cross-referencing of ranks between the professional branches" in the outer administration noted by Cornell Fleischer extended through the two inner worlds of the palace.[127] In 1664 the average stipend of the pages in training in the five chambers—the Greater and Lesser chambers and the Pantry, Treasury, and Campaign Chambers (excluding the Privy Chamber)—was 8.5 aspers a day;[128] in 1652 the average stipend of the *jariyes* in the New Palace (excluding the *Dar üs-Saade* group) was 8.7 aspers a day.[129] The four highest ranking pages of the Privy Chamber (the *arz ağaları*) received stipends equivalent to those of the principal members of the *Dar üs-Saade* group: according to Bobovius, the sultan's stirrup-holder received 140 aspers a day, his sword-bearer 100 aspers, the keeper of his garments 80 aspers, and the keeper of his linen 50 aspers.[130] For most of the period in this study, the harem stewardess—the highest paid officer in the harem—received a stipend of 200 aspers a day, which was paralleled in the palace outer service only by that of the keeper of the standard,[131] a position to which were promoted the highest-ranking pages and aghas of the Privy Chamber.[132]

Another similarity between the third courtyard and the harem institutions was the seriousness of the educational enterprise undertaken in each. The ambitious program of study followed by the third courtyard pages was paralled in the harem by training in skills that were deemed appropriate to the women at the various levels of its hierarchy. Angiolello, a page in the palace during the reign of Mehmed II, described the training of the women in the sultan's harem: "[T]he most senior [women], who are trained, teach the new and unrefined to speak and read and instruct them in the Muhammadan law, and also teach them to sew and embroider, and to play the harp and to sing, and instruct them in all their ceremonies and customs, to the degree that [these girls] have the inclination to learn."[133] Nearly two centuries later, Bobovius described a similar situation:

> Among all these Slaves, those who occupy elevated ranks in the service of their mistress [the *valide sultan*] are obliged to do no work at all, but the others are made to perform all necessary services such as cleaning the rooms, sewing, embroidering, and bleaching, and they are even made to work on the clothing of the pages, which tailors, after having cut the cloth, send to them to be sewn.[134]

Both institutions were characterized by enforced industriousness and a strictness of discipline, and were compared by foreigners to monasteries. As in the third courtyard, a rule of silence prevailed in the harem, where there were female mutes, lending it an air of serious and solemn endeavor.[135]

Needlework appears to have been the principal skill imparted to the ordinary harem inhabitant. Menavino, a page in the palace of Bayezid II and Selim I, related that ten teachers of embroidery would come to the Old Palace every morning to instruct the young recruits.[136] According to Postel, who was writing in the mid-sixteenth century, those who were trained in the arts of the needle were the many who, because of "lack of beauty and grace," failed to rise to higher status. However, commented Postel, the sultan had them trained with such diligence that one would think they were his daughters.[137] There was little leisure time for ordinary residents of the harem; for, according to Bobovius, "[their] occupation, when they are not employed in domestic duties, is to work embroidery in gold or silk thread on cotton cloth, which they make into handkerchiefs or turbans which they wrap around their heads."[138] Their skill at needlework seems to have stood these women in good stead, however, for when they were transferred to the Old Palace at the death of the sultan they served, they were able to generate some income from the sale of their handiwork through the intermediacy of Jewish tradeswomen.[139]

Bobovius's claim that those who occupied elevated ranks in the harem were obliged to do no work no doubt referred to their freedom from domestic service. Women who made their way up the harem hierarchy by appointment to the training/service divisions or to the suites of high-ranking family or household staff members presumably spent their time acquiring and perfecting the skills and manners appropriate to their new station. Those who showed an aptitude for instrumental music, singing, or dance were trained in these arts. The *valide sultan* selected the most talented and beautiful of these more highly trained women for her own suite. According to Paul Rycaut, secretary to the English embassy in the 1660s,

> Out of these, the Queen Mother chooses her Court, and orderly draws from the Schools such as she marks out for the most beauteous, facetious [witty], or most corresponding with the harmony of her own disposition, and prefers them to a near attendance on her Person, or to other Offices of her Court. These are always richly attired and adorned with all sorts of precious stones,

fit to receive the adresses and amours of the *sultan:* over them is placed the *Kadun Kahia* or Mother of the Maids; who is carefull to correct any immodest or light behaviour amongst them, and instructs them in all the Rules and Orders of the Court.[140]

Waiting on the *valide sultan,* while it did not involve hard labor, was undoubtedly a full-time occupation, similar to the constant attendance on the sultan by the pages of the Privy Chamber and similarly reserved for the select of the trainees. These women were instructed with an eye to their eligibility for the highest position to which a harem resident might aspire. According to Bobovius, the sultan almost always chose his concubines from among the attendants of his mother, who trained them for just that purpose: "[S]he takes care to keep them splendidly outfitted and to have them instructed in all that they can learn so that they might be capable of inspiring in the Grand Seigneur the love which might allow them to become concubines, and perhaps one among them the favorite and the honored mother of his eldest son, or else to be married to persons of quality outside the palace."[141]

To sum up, the career of a *jariye* might culminate in one of three ways: entry into the dynastic family as the mother of an Ottoman prince, promotion to one of the administrative offices of the harem institution, or manumission and entry into the Ottoman ruling elite as the wife of a male servant of the dynasty. It is not clear at what point the harem career bifurcated, but it seems likely that the concubinal career was accessible only to those women at the very peak of the training process. A successful career as concubine, as with the pages, depended on character, intelligence, and accomplishment as well as on physical appeal. Women at this level of training who did not become royal concubines most probably went on to occupy the highest offices in the administrative/supervisory staff of the harem or to marry men high in the sultan's service.

Titles that came into official use at the end of the seventeenth century (and were probably used informally before then) suggest that the training of a talented *jariye* prepared her for both a concubinal and an administrative career.[142] A woman who became the sultan's *ikbal*—a favorite companion, perhaps concubine, of the sultan, who ranked below the senior concubines (*kadıns*) and was in line for promotion to the rank of *kadın*—also carried the title *kalfa* ("assistant master/mistress"), a rank below that of *usta* ("master/mistress"), the title of the leading administrative/supervisory officers of the harem.[143] The titles *usta* and *kalfa* belong to the terminology of Ottoman guild organization and other hierarchically organized corporate bodies. That these women were known simultaneously as *ikbal* and *kalfa* suggests that they were eligible for both kinds of high-level harem career.

A final way in which the two inner palace organizations were similar is the slave status of their personnel. While it was not impossible for freeborn Muslims to be trained as pages in the third courtyard of the palace—indeed, their access to this education increased in the seventeenth century[144]—the great majority of the inhabitants of the third courtyard were slaves. If we



knew more about the inhabitants of the harem, perhaps we would find a similar presence of Muslim women within its ranks. Current evidence, however, suggests that the imperial harem was composed exclusively of slave concubines. One of the key features of dynastic politics—reproduction through concubinage rather than through legal marriage—suggests that the freeborn Muslim woman was an anachronism in the harem. The protest against Osman II's marriage to the daughter of the *müfti* was inspired largely by the inappropriateness of such a free Muslim woman joining the sultan's harem. The only inhabitants of the harem who were not slaves were the *valide sultan,* freed automatically upon the death of her master, and the princesses of the royal family. The one, however, had risen as a slave concubine to her lofty position and the others were insignificant figures in the hierarchy of the harem.

## Harem Networks of Power

Despite their considerable influence, high-ranking women of the imperial harem were for the most part confined to the palace. If they left the royal residence, it was under the tight surveillance of the black eunuch guards of the harem. Only the *valide sultan* appears to have had mobility outside the confines of the harem: in public ceremonials she might make herself visible from within her carriage or palanquin as she cast coins to onlookers or acknowledged their obeisances. She might also meet with high-ranking government officials in private conference if she were carefully veiled or screened. On a routine basis, however, even she did not have face-to-face contact with men. Thus it was essential that women of the harem develop links with individuals or groups in the outside world. There was no lack of parties eager to cooperate, for as the harem became an ever more important locus of imperial authority not only did its residents require outside channels through which they might accomplish their political goals, but outsiders were anxious to form ties with potential patrons within the palace.

Like the sultans during this period, women of the harem built much of their networking on family-based relationships. As I have noted, the family was not limited to blood relationships but included the entire royal household, the vast majority of which was composed of slaves. Within the imperial harem, it was the sultan's mother and his favorite concubine or concubines who were best positioned to build for themselves or for their sons factional support bridging the palace and the outer world. For one thing, they might be mothers of princesses as well as of the sultan or potential sultans. For another, their status and wealth permitted them to control the careers of a large number of personal attendants and to influence the careers of the harem's administrative officials. The manumission of a slave, a meritorious act for a Muslim, worked to the practical benefit of the former owner, who enjoyed the loyalty of the ex-slave in a clientage relationship. The seventeenth-century historian Mustafa Naima praised the generosity of the *valide sultan* Kösem, who ap-

pears to have taken pains to cultivate close ties of patronage with her freed slaves:

> [S]he would free her slave women after two or three years of service, and would arrange marriages with retired officers of the court or suitable persons from outside, giving the women dowries and jewels and several purses of money according to their talents and station, and ensuring that their husbands had suitable positions. She looked after these former slaves by giving them an annual stipend, and on the religious festivals and holy days she would give them purses of money.[145]

Manumitted slaves might act as agents for their former mistresses, just as princess daughters, when married, could help their mothers, who remained within the imperial compound. Because both daughters and freed slaves might be counted on to influence their husbands to act as advocates, *valide sultans* and *hasekis* strove to exert as much control as possible over the choice of those husbands.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the transfer of loyalty from the palace to the outside world is the career of Meleki Khatun, who served both Kösem Sultan and her successor Turhan. Meleki was originally a member of Kösem Sultan's suite. In 1648 Kösem's second sultan son, İbrahim, was deposed for mental incompetence, an event that should have brought her twenty-five year career as *valide sultan* to an end. However, instead of retiring and relinquishing her office to the mother of İbrahim's successor, she was asked by leading statesmen to stay on as regent to the new sultan, her seven-year-old grandson Mehmed IV, because of the youth of his mother, Turhan. When, however, Turhan began to assert what she saw as her rightful authority, Kösem reportedly planned to depose the young sultan and replace him with another prince, whose mother she believed more tractable. At this point Meleki deserted Kösem and betrayed her plans to Turhan, thus enabling the latter to eliminate her mother-in-law (Kösem was murdered in a palace coup led by Turhan's chief black eunuch). Meleki became the new *valide sultan*'s loyal and favored retainer. She was eventually manumitted and married to Şaban Khalife, a former page in the palace training school. The couple established residence in Istanbul, where, as a team, they were ideally suited to act as channels of information and intercessors on behalf of individuals with petitions for the palace. Şaban received male petitioners, Meleki female petitioners; Şaban exploited contacts he had formed while serving within the palace, while Meleki exploited her relationship with Turhan Sultan. The political influence of the couple grew to such a point that they lost their lives in 1656 when troops stationed in Istanbul rebelled against alleged abuses in government.[146]

The links established through family and household connections of high-ranking harem officers outside the palace might be of a quite high level. Particularly important were the connections of the sultan's former wet nurse and the harem stewardess; in terms of stipend and ceremonial prestige, these two were the highest ranking women in the harem after members of the royal family. A *valide sultan* might turn to one of these women to form a political bridge to the outside world, as did the mother of Mustafa I. No one had expected that Mustafa, who suffered from severe emotional problems, would become sultan, and so his mother had not enjoyed a position of much status within the imperial harem.[147] As *valide sultan* she had a potential ally in her daughter's husband, Kara Davud Pasha, but during Mustafa's first reign, which lasted only three months, she was unable to exploit this relationship by appointing Davud Pasha vezir. Indeed, she may not have *wished* to challenge existing authority: the incumbent grand vezir had, after all, allowed the violation of the centuries-old tradition of father-son succession in favor of Mustafa. Nevertheless, the *valide sultan* worked to build alliances loyal to her son and herself: the sultan's sword-bearer Mustafa Agha, a high-ranking inner palace officer, was brought out of the palace and awarded the prestigious and strategically vital post of governor of Egypt on condition that he marry the sultan's wet nurse.[148] When, four years later, Mustafa was suddenly catapulted to the throne for a second time at the deposition of his nephew Osman II, the *valide sultan*'s first choice for grand vezir was her son-in-law, Davud Pasha. When he became a political liability and had to be removed from office, the *valide sultan* had the former sword-bearer appointed grand vezir at the first opportunity.[149] The political bond created through the marriage of the wet nurse and the sword-bearer was doubly strong, since both had been intimate personal servants of the sultan.

The most important links with centers of power outside the palace were forged by harem women through the marriages of their daughters, the princesses of the dynasty, to leading statesmen. As we have seen in Chapter 3, becoming a royal son-in-law, a *damad*, was a mark of high honor, conferred generally on the highest-ranking government officers or on promising younger officers. The weddings of princesses and *damads* were lavishly celebrated state occasions, serving in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to demonstrate imperial magnificence and munificence, as the weddings of princes, now confined to the palace and forbidden to marry, had done in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The dynasty had always used the marriages of princesses for political ends; what stands out in this period is the frequency with which they occurred. By the seventeenth century, serial marriages of princesses were common. Serial marriage was possible because princesses might first be engaged or married at the age of two or three (this practice of engaging or marrying small children was not confined to the royal family; such marriages appear in sixteenth-century Anatolian records).[150] By the time a princess reached puberty, she could be in her third or fourth marriage, since her husbands encountered many risks in high office, including death in battle or by execution. Perhaps the most extreme example of this practice, Kösem's daughters Ayşe and Fatma were each married at least half a dozen times. They were well along in years at their final betrothals: Ayşe was approximately fifty and Fatma sixty-one.[151]

A rare inside view of these marriages is made possible by Evliya Çelebi's frequent mention in his *Book of Travels* of Melek Ahmed Pasha, his patron and twice an imperial *damad*.[152] In 1644 Melek Ahmed, who was then in his

mid-fifties, was married to Kaya Sultan, the thirteen-year-old daughter of Murad IV, the most heroic and the most autocratic of the seventeenth-century sultans. Kaya refused to allow the pasha near her on her wedding night—when she even struck him with a dagger—and for seven years thereafter (Evliya attributes her fear of her husband to a prophesy that she would die were she to bear him a daughter). Eventually, however, their marriage became a very happy one, although the princess died in childbirth at the age of twenty-six. Melek Ahmed was so devastated that he flung himself on Kaya's coffin during her funeral and wept uncontrollably, scandalizing the assembled grandees of the empire.[153]

Kaya's support of her husband was of enormous political importance. On several occasions she rushed to his aid with both strategic and financial assistance. Evliya also portrays Kaya as an extraordinarily generous patron and a most pious woman. Praising her many good qualities, he writes: "It is a fact that, of the seventeen sultanas who were alive in those days, none got on with her husband so well as Kaya with Melek. She was, too, very clever and prudent in managing her household. She was a true daughter of Sultan Murad IV, a raging lioness, and a benefactress to all the other sultanas."[154] While Evliya's account is no doubt colored by his multiple ties to the household of Kaya and Melek Ahmed, through patronage (he was a retainer of the pasha and his sister was a retainer of the princess), kinship (his mother and the pasha were first cousins), and ethnic solidarity (both Evliya and Melek were Abkhasian), it is evident that Kaya exemplified the dynasty's duty of beneficence.

Melek Ahmed Pasha's subsequent marriage to Fatma Sultan, daughter of Kösem and aunt to Kaya, was another story. At the time of their wedding, Fatma, who had been married several times already, was in her late fifties, the pasha in his seventies. According to Evliya's account, Melek Ahmed was miserable over the marriage, which he blamed on the antagonism of the late grand vezir Köprülü Mehmed Pasha ("I gave Melek an elephant, let him feed her," remarked Köprülü). On the couple's wedding night, the princess gave the pasha a peremptory account of the support she expected him to provide for herself and her large household. When he pleaded that such sums were impossible, she answered that divorce was the only solution and he should prepare to return her dowry, which amounted to a year's tax revenues from Egypt.[155] When the pasha died shortly thereafter, Fatma Sultan immediately sealed the rooms of his residence, claiming his treasury and all his possessions as her dowry; it took the grand vezir's intervention to set the situation aright. Were the story to be recounted from the princess's point of view, however, it might be that Fatma Sultan was as unhappy with the marriage as Melek Ahmed.

With the greater seclusion of the sultan in the post-Süleymanic period, the strong personal bonds that had earlier existed between the ruler and his leading subjects, forged as they fought side by side and sat together in the imperial council, were no longer possible. The frequency of princess-*damad* marriages in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries no doubt reflected the greater importance of these alliances as a kind of political cement sealing



the loyalty of statesmen to their sovereign. Bringing a pasha into the royal family as *damad* might even serve to control sedition, as in the case of the rebel vezir İbşir Mustafa Pasha, who became the final husband of the six-times-married Ayşe. When İbşir amassed a huge number of troops in Anatolia and began to defy imperial orders on the grounds of avenging the deposition of Sultan İbrahim and assuming the neglected defense of the empire against the "heretical" Safavids, the young sultan Mehmed IV and the *valide sultan* Turhan adopted the strategy of appointing him grand vezir and making him imperial *damad*. The marriage served to honor and symbolically to reunite the disaffected pasha with his sovereign house, but it also had the more practical outcome of forcing İbşir to come to the capital and fixing his location (the palace of his wife). Soon after his arrival in Istanbul, İbşir was executed.[156] But while the "honor" of becoming a royal son-in-law may have limited a statesman's maneuverability, it also continued, as in the sixteenth century, to enhance his status: as governor of Van, Melek Ahmed Pasha couched an ultimatum to a rebel Kurdish leader under his jurisdiction in the following words: "[M]y khan and brother, I do request that you keep this in mind: I am a grand vezir of the Ottoman sultans. In particular, I am the son-in-law of Sultan Murad IV. And now I am governor of the province of Van."[157]

Obviously, not only sultans but their mothers and consorts as well benefited immensely from the practice of princess-*damad* marriage (the first example of a powerful harem-*damad* alliance was that of Süleyman's favorite Hurrem and his grand vezir Rüstem). Married princesses enjoyed relatively easy access to the imperial harem, their parental home, and could serve as informants, couriers, and political strategists. Because the interests of princesses and their mothers in the harem were harmonious—the goals of the former being to prolong the political careers, indeed the lives, of their husbands, and of the latter to secure loyal allies on the outside—the networks formed by the marriages of princesses were extremely vital ones. It is surely no coincidence that the most powerful *valide sultans* were those with several daughters: Nurbanu (*valide sultan* from 1574 to 1583) had three and possibly four; Safiye (1595–1603) had two, and Kösem (1623–1651) had at least three. Indeed, it was largely the efforts of *valide sultans* that resulted in the frequency of princess-statesman alliances in this period. Such political links were vital to sustaining the regencies frequent in the first half of the seventeenth century.

While the *valide sultan* was not alone in deciding who princesses would marry, the significant influence she exerted in these arrangements gave her considerable opportunity to shape the networks and alliances that cemented the loyalty of the dynasty's most important servants. She arranged the marriages not only of her own daughters but also of the daughters of her son and his concubines. It was in the *valide sultan*'s interest to marry off her granddaughters so that she might reap the political benefit of claiming their husbands as her political allies. The Venetian ambassador reported in 1583 that Nurbanu planned to marry her son Murad III's second daughter to the head of the palace guards.[158] Kösem's long career gave her considerable opportunity to forge

family-based alliances. In 1626 or thereabout she wrote to the grand vezir Hafiz Ahmed Pasha proposing marriage to one of her daughters: "Whenever you're ready, let me know and I'll act accordingly. We'll take care of you right away. I have a princess ready. I'll do just as I did when I sent out my Fatma."[159] Hafiz Ahmed became the third husband of Ayşe. In the early 1640s Kösem emerged victorious from a conflict with a concubine of her recently deceased son Murad IV over the marital fortunes of the thirteen-year-old Kaya, daughter of the concubine and granddaughter of Kösem. The concubine was anxious for Kaya to marry one of her own political allies, the former sultan's sword-bearer, but Kösem's candidate, Melek Ahmed, won out.[160] However, because of the practice of serial marriage, a princess's mother might eventually profit from alliances to be made through her daughter.

The importance the dynasty attached to princess-*damad* alliances was not without its critics. Karaçelebizade Abdülaziz Efendi objected to the monies allotted to child princesses betrothed or married to prominent statesmen (the future brides remained in the imperial harem until they reached the age when the marriage might be consumated). He asserted that the extraordinary sums alloted in 1648 to two four-year-old daughters of the deposed İbrahim were being diverted from the public treasury in contravention of the Sharia.[161] On the other hand, Evliya Çelebi's account of the seizure immediately following Kaya Sultan's death of her treasury and household goods at the order of the grand vezir Köprülü Mehmed Pasha[162] suggests that princesses were treated no differently from other members of the ruling elite in terms of their financial status. Money and material goods accumulated by powerful individuals in the service of the state (including members of the dynasty) were viewed as property on loan, the temporary or usufruct use of which ceased when the owner left office or died. Increasingly during the seventeenth century, systematic confiscation of the estates of deceased notables became a principal means of filling the imperial treasury;[163] estates were inventoried immediately upon the death of an individual and often ruthlessly seized, as in the case of Kaya Sultan. As always, we need to evaluate criticism of the dynasty and its practices in the context of the partisan factionalism that was the political milieu of the times. Karaçelebizade, for example, was a notoriously contentious and outspoken member of the *ulema* and an enemy of the *valide sultan* Kösem who was undoubtedly instrumental in the allotment of funds to the two child princesses. Nevertheless, his criticism underlines the extraordinary concentration of wealth and power in the dynasty and in the capital. Now that princes no longer played public roles or headed courtly households, it was the females of the royal family who served alongside the sultan in demonstrating the dynasty's wealth and distributing its largesse.

In conclusion, it is clear that a *valide sultan* or a powerful concubine could work different sectors of public government by creating and utilizing the variety of networks described above. Through the marriages of princesses or the imperial wet nurse, alliances could be formed with the most powerful of statesmen. Through clientage ties with former slaves, contacts could be created with a wide range of middle-level public officials. It is important to recognize that this



establishment of a constellation of contacts outside the palace was by no means surreptitious. Nor was it a uniquely "female" or "harem" paradigm for the organization of political patronage and the creation of political influence. The governing class of the Ottoman Empire in this period operated not so much on the basis of institutionally or functionally ascribed authority as through a complex of personal bonds and family and household connections. Functionally ascribed authority—authority devolving from one's office—certainly existed, but more important was the web of individual relations—of patronage and clientage, of teacher and student, of kinship and marriage—that brought one to that office and that one used in the exercise of one's official power. Men as well as women sustained their careers by means of such networks, and men and women played significant roles in the formation of each other's networks.

Only when the paradigm of rigidly separate public/male and private/female spheres is discarded can we begin to appreciate the ways in which the structure of the Ottoman ruling class enabled women to participate in the political life of the empire. Conversely, by understanding how women were able to acquire and exercise power, we obtain a clearer picture of the structure of Ottoman politics and society in the early modern period. That the household was the fundamental unit of Ottoman political organization in this period is widely recognized, but the role of women in the construction and maintenance of the household system has been ignored. Whether the essential role played by women in the Ottoman dynastic household was reflected in the organization and operation of households of lesser status is a subject for future research.